

Opening Remarks
Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Sandra Clark
Ribbon Cutting of Rural Road Project – Laty, Casamance
U.S. Department of Agriculture-SFL Casamance
Monday, August 18, 2014

Dear Representative of the Governor,
Dear President of the Departmental Council,
Dear Prefet,
Dear Village Chief of Laty,
Dear Village Chiefs and Representatives of the Local Authorities,
Dear Representative of Construction Supervisors,
Dear Representative of Women and Youth Workers,
Dear Villagers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to be here to mark the completion of the very first road renovation under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's program with Shelter for Life. This three-year, \$8.0 million program supports Shelter for Life's efforts to rebuild rural roads in the Casamance. Thank you all for coming to help us mark this special occasion.

This 12-kilometer stretch runs through the villages of Laty, Sindone, and Yabon. It was built by 268 local laborers under a cash-for-work program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This project not only rehabilitates roads, it also provides income to those who worked on it. This stretch of road links production zones to the major highway, the Route Nationale 6, which is being rebuilt with funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Its completion will help spur market development of agricultural products and ensure food security. This stretch is the first of what several stretches which the USDA and its partner, Shelter for Life plan to refurbish. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture supports a program that helps cashew farmers and processors in the Casamance with marketing. I am sure that those farmers will benefit from these renovated feeder roads and the RN6.

I was in Casamance a few weeks ago and got a glimpse of the work that went into the renovation of this road. I want to thank all of those who contributed to its completion, notably:

- Governor Dieng,
- Prefet Dia,
- The Director of the school of Laty,
- workers from neighboring villages,
- Joani Dong from USDA in Dakar, and
- Jim Dean from Shelter for Life.

Each one of you, as well as those who I acknowledged in the beginning of my remarks, played a vital role in the completion of this complex project. Without any one of you, we would not have been able to finish the road. Thank you all for your willingness to work together in a spirit of cooperation, in the interest of your fellow neighbors and the future economic development of these villages.

I also want to commend the government officials, chiefs, imams, priests, journalists, community groups and villagers who have worked tirelessly towards a lasting peace despite 32 years of conflict. We applaud the commitment of the Government of Senegal and the

combatant leaders to seek a peaceful and definitive solution to the conflict. We urge that negotiations to this end move forward as rapidly as possible.

The project we are inaugurating today offers a glimpse of the possibilities for a Casamance definitively at peace. However, we continue to urgently need everyone's support to resume demining and construct additional feeder roads within the framework of this USDA project.

The tragedy which occurred on Saturday to residents of the village of Dioundankantanpor shows the necessity of intensifying our efforts to demine the area. I would like to offer my condolences to the families of the victims and I wish those who remain in the hospital a good recovery.

As I mentioned, this USDA project envisions rebuilding a total of 130 kilometers of road graced by 260 kilometers of drainage systems. This project will employ up to 900 workers over a three-year period. We look forward to the completion of this network of roads to the benefit of this region and Senegal as a whole.

Better and wider feeder roads will pave the way for vehicles to carry out crops to market. The jobs created during the construction of the road and the economic opportunities generated will enable people to do many things such as pay school fees or buy medicine. Roads provide the incentive for people to return to villages abandoned during the long years of conflict.

After the rainy season, we hope to begin work on a six-kilometer road that links the villages of Adeane and Kagniaka -- and a 10-kilometer road that links the villages of Bissine and Diagon. All going well, they will be renovated by the end of the year. I look forward to celebrating again when those sections of road are completed.

Thank you again for being here today, and thank you for being partners in peace and prosperity. Thank you for your kind attention.